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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 002441

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/22/2019  
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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS OZAWA

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Classified By: Ambassador John V. Roos per 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: DPJ Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa stressed several times to the Ambassador October 21 that his focus is on politics and elections, and that he cannot discuss policy. That said, he underlined the importance of the U.S.-Japan relationship and assured the Ambassador that the Hatoyama government would not deviate from this basic line. He also urged the USG to speak "frankly and honestly" to the Japanese Government, adding that regardless of the issue, the DPJ will respond in good faith. Ozawa also noted the continued importance of the DPJ's coalition with the Socialists and PNP, but added that the party will nonetheless seek a clear-cut majority in the Upper House next year to promote a stronger government. Overall, Ozawa was warm and open during the 40-minute meeting, and seemed genuinely pleased with the Ambassador's invitation to meet again to continue their conversation. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador met ruling DPJ Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa for the first time on October 21. Responding to the Ambassador's offer of congratulations for the DPJ's recent Lower House victory, Ozawa said that the party is currently fighting an election campaign (the October 25 Upper House by-elections in Kanagawa and Shizuoka prefectures) and would fight the next Upper House election in July 2010. "Too many elections are a headache," Ozawa said. Commenting on the recent decision by a four-person political grouping in the Upper House to join the DPJ, Ozawa noted that the DPJ still lacked an Upper House majority and required the cooperation of its coalition partners, the Socialists and the People's New Party. Although the DPJ will continue to maintain its coalition relationship, the party still needs to seek a clear-cut majority in the Upper House in order to "strengthen the government," Ozawa said.

¶3. (C) Ozawa emphasized that, within the Hatoyama government, he is in charge of politics and the party, and the Prime Minister and his government are in charge of policy. He apologetically explained that, given this division of labor, he cannot discuss policy issues with the Ambassador. "I have to be extra careful because any perception of my involvement in policy will cause misunderstandings and the press will paint me in a bad light," he said. "I must focus only on elections," Ozawa added.

¶4. (C) In response to the Ambassador's request for Ozawa's general thoughts on the U.S.-Japan relationship, Ozawa said that the bilateral relationship is the "most important one" for Japan and that, personally, "I like Americans." He urged

the Ambassador to understand that the DPJ and Hatoyama government will not deviate from this basic line regarding the importance of U.S.-Japan ties. "Although I am not a diplomat, I have some experience in resolving disputes between the United States and Japan, including playing eleventh-hour roles in the negotiations surrounding construction, telecom, beef, oranges and the FSX," Ozawa said. Part of the problem in these and other disputes was the perception that the Japanese negotiators didn't mean what they said. "This became clear when a former DUSTR told me that Japanese are liars and can't be trusted," Ozawa explained. The issue was often how Japanese was translated into English, and Ozawa worked hard to dispel Japan's "untrustworthy image," ensuring that "no" meant "no" and that "yes" meant "yes," with Ozawa "prepared to stake my political life on the matter."

15. (C) Acknowledging that Futenma and other issues are before the United States and Japan, Ozawa said the Japanese side will always speak "frankly and honestly," and he urged the U.S. side to do the same. "Whatever the issue, the DPJ will respond in a good faith manner," Ozawa assured the Ambassador. Noting the significant political changes in both Washington and Tokyo, the Ambassador stressed the need for our leaders to communicate closely and openly during this critical time. Ozawa responded by expressing regret that he could not discuss "as much as I'd like with you," but it's a sensitive time this early on in the Hatoyama government, and "I'm in a subtle position." That said, Ozawa warmly accepted the Ambassador's invitation to meet again to continue their conversation on politics and other matters.

16. (C) Ozawa also discussed briefly his involvement in promoting grassroots exchanges between the United States and

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Japan, including his support for an elementary school in Chicago that teaches Japanese (he sponsors a student trip to Japan every year). Ozawa also plays a leading role in the John Manjiro Foundation -- named after the first Japanese to be educated in the United States in the 19th century after being rescued at sea by an American whaler -- which brings together Americans and Japanese every year to promote mutual understanding. Ozawa further noted his involvement in Japan-PRC grassroots exchanges, and said that, because he is known as a promoter of stronger ties with China, "I can say anything I want to the Chinese and they won't get mad because they know I'm well intentioned."

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